

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

I am writing to make you aware of the viewpoint of your constituents. I am librarian working in Los Angeles county. Inevitably when I am introduced to people for the first time and they find out what I do for a living, their reaction is always the same. They are astounded that our school not only has one full time librarian but two. They are green with envy that our school has a full library program which services students in grades preschool through eight. The reason we have a library and librarians is because we are an independent school. Without exception these individuals whose children attend public schools express very strong feelings regarding the lack of libraries and librarians in their schools. I am passing along the comments from two such mothers I spoke with this past weekend.

One mother has three children attending school in the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School district. (SMMUSD) She has held several titles in SMMPTA council as well as in her local units. These positions are in addition to volunteering for the SM Malibu Education Foundation. Due to the recent state budget cuts, SMMUSD parents spear-headed ballot measure A which was an additional parcel tax for the residents and businesses in hopes of maintaining SMMUSD's high educational standards. Measure A did not pass and consequently all SMMUSD elementary schools lost their librarians, as well as other services.

This parent is devastated about the loss of the school librarian and the exceptional services she has provided for the elementary school. This individual is especially disappointed that the state cannot see the benefits of the librarians in the schools. The librarian who will no longer be at McKinley Elementary School (a Title 1 School) was instrumental in guiding the children to their specific areas of interest and encouraging reading in children who otherwise showed no interest in reading. This librarian knew the likes/dislikes/interests of all the children attending McKinley Elementary School. Additionally, the Special Day Class at McKinley will not have the benefit of interaction with the librarian. These non-verbal children benefitted from her assistance in communicating through books.

In Long Beach Unified School District they have experienced cutbacks as well. In the Long Beach Elementary Schools librarians are viewed as dispensable as well. Another mother I spoke to has two children attending Longfellow Elementary School. This past school year they had a teacher librarian only two days a week. Consequently, the library was only open two days a week. Parents stepped forward and offered to man the library the other three days of the week. They were told that due to union rules they were not allowed to volunteer without a librarian was in the library. In a school of 835 students, they had two days a week in which to visit the library. Kindergarten students were only able to visit the library once a month. The class visits were short to accommodate all the classes. Between the age of the collection and the hours available, the library was essentially not a functional resource. The collection available at their school is dated; the average age of the books is 1993. Students presented with dated nonfiction are getting misinformation. Library collections need to be current

especially in certain areas such as science. In order for the librarian to partially update the collection the librarian solicited donations from parents. Next year, Longfellow Elementary School will once again be without a teacher librarian. The library will be open three days a week, however, it will not be staffed with a librarian. Teachers will bring in students and a library clerk will be there to check out books. The students will be losing out on instruction and resources due to budget cuts.

We need our students to be literate in the 21st century. In order to do this they'll need resources and training. They'll need to be literate with print sources as well as digital sources. To be productive, capable citizens, they'll need to be able to find, evaluate, and use a host of information. If there are no teacher librarians in the schools, there's no hope of our students mastering these skills.

I once heard that every letter from an individual represents 100 voters. At the very least this letter represents that many voters. We are short-changing our children and mortgaging our future. Educationally our state and country lag behind in every way. Our students will be ill-prepared to meet the needs in the future job market. As a result, our state and country will suffer. Please consider the future of our state, country, and children when making budget decisions. We need our libraries and we need our librarians to raise a generation of information literate, capable students.

Respectfully,

Elaine Cardenas